

Claims

5 1. An input device comprising:
 a first selector that generates a signal that controls placement of a
symbol on a computer display, said computer display being coupled to a
computer that receives said signal from said first selector; and
 a second selector that causes said computer to display information that
10 pertains to becoming a member of an ad hoc network.

 2. The input device of claim 1, wherein said second selector causes said
computer to display information that pertains to initiating an ad hoc network.

15 3. The input device of claim 1, wherein said second selector causes said
computer to display information that pertains to joining an existing ad hoc
network.

20 4. The input device of claim 1, wherein said input device is a computer
keyboard and wherein said second selector is a button located on said
computer keyboard.

25 5. The input device of claim 4, wherein said symbol is an alphanumeric
character generated by said first selector.

 6. The input device of claim 4, wherein said computer keyboard
communicates with said computer by way of a wireless interface.

30 7. The input device of claim 1, wherein said input device is a graphical
input device and wherein said second selector is a button located on said
graphical input device.

8. The input device of claim 7, wherein said symbol is one of an arrow and an I-beam pointer.

5 9. The input device of claim 7, wherein said graphical input device communicates with said computer by way of a wireless interface.

10 10. In a computer, a method for initiating an ad hoc network, comprising:
receiving a command to initiate said ad hoc network, said command
originating from an input conveyed to said computer by an input device;
10 presenting a list of usernames that correspond to other users within
wireless communications range of said computer; and
transmitting content to at least some of said other users within said
wireless communications range.

15 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said input device is a keyboard
connected to said computer.

20 12. The method of claim 10, wherein said input device is a graphical
input device that controls the placement of an arrow on a display associated
with said computer.

13. The method of claim 10, additionally comprising decoupling said
computer from a wireless communications infrastructure.

25 14. The method of claim 10, additionally comprising receiving an
indication that a user of said computer desires to allow a certain one of said
usernames to join said ad hoc network, said indication being conveyed to said
computer by said input device.

30 15. The method of claim 10, additionally comprising receiving
authentication information from at least one of said users within wireless
communications range of said computer.

16. The method of claim 10, wherein said presenting action includes presenting a document that includes said list of said usernames, and wherein selecting at least one username of said list of usernames causes said computer
5 to transmit a meeting invitation to said at least one username.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said document is one of the group consisting of a distribution list, a report, an electronic mail message, and a spread sheet.

18. A computer that establishes an ad hoc network, comprising:
a keyboard having a selector that generates a signal which indicates that a user has selected an ad hoc networking function;
a processor, coupled to said keyboard, which receives said signal and
15 initiates an ad hoc network function; and
a network interface, coupled to said processor, for communicating directly with at least one other computer within wireless communications range of said first computer.

19. The computer of claim 18, wherein said selector is a button that is depressed by said user when said user selects said ad hoc function.

20. The computer of claim 18, wherein said network interface transmits and receives information in accordance with an 802.11 protocol.

21. The computer of claim 20, wherein said processor additionally directs said network interface to decouple from a communications infrastructure in response to receiving said signal.

22. The computer of claim 18, wherein said network interface transmits and receives information in accordance with a Bluetooth protocol.

23. The computer of claim 18, wherein said network interface additionally receives at least one identifier that corresponds to said at least one other computer within wireless communications range said computer that establishes said ad hoc network.

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24. A method of receiving content in an ad hoc network, comprising; selecting, by a user, an ad hoc network function, said selection being made by way of an ad hoc selector on a keyboard coupled to a computer; said computer configuring itself to connect with said ad hoc network; and said computer receiving content present on said ad hoc network.

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25. The method of claim 24, wherein said computer configures itself according to settings used to conduct a previous ad hoc meeting.

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26. The method of claim 24, additionally comprising said computer presenting a list of previous ad hoc network session names to said user, said presenting occurring prior to said configuring.

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27. The method of claim 26, additionally comprising said computer receiving a session name selected by a user from said list of previous ad hoc session names.

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28. The method of claim 24, wherein said selector is a button on said keyboard.

29. The method of claim 24, wherein said ad hoc network operates over a local area network using a wireline interface.

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30. The method of claim 24, wherein said ad hoc network operates over a wide area network.

31. A method for communicating by way of an ad hoc network,
comprising:

a first computer receiving an input from an ad hoc network selector
5 positioned on a keyboard connected to said first computer;

a second computer receiving an indication that said first computer has
initiated an ad hoc network; and

said second computer receiving an input from an ad hoc selector
positioned on a keyboard connected to said second computer.

32. The method of claim 31, additionally comprising said second
computer transmitting a username to said first computer.

33. The method of claim 32, additionally comprising said second
15 computer transmitting authentication information to said first computer.

34. The method of claim 33, additionally comprising said first computer
verifying the authenticity of said authentication information.

35. The method of claim 31, additionally comprising said second
20 computer receiving content from said first computer.

36. The method of claim 31, additionally comprising at least one of said
first and said second computers decoupling from a communications
25 infrastructure.

37. The method of claim 31, additionally comprising said second
computer illuminating said ad hoc selector, said illuminating occurring in
response to said second computer receiving said indication from said first
30 computer.

38. The method of claim 31, additionally comprising said second computer causing an icon on a display associated with said second computer to blink in response to said second computer receiving said indication.

39. One or more computer-readable media having computer-readable instructions thereon which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a method comprising:

receiving a command to initiate an ad hoc network, said command originating from an input conveyed to said computer by a keyboard in response to a selection made by a user of said computer;

configuring said computer to initiate an ad hoc network; and
transmitting content to at least one other user within wireless communications range of said computer.

40. The computer-readable media of claim 39, wherein the computer-readable instructions, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute the additional action of presenting a username to said user of said computer, said username corresponding to said at least one other user.

41. The computer-readable media of claim 40, wherein selecting said username causes said computer to transmit a meeting invitation to a computer that associated with said username.

42. The computer-readable media of claim 41, wherein said username is presented by way of a document presented to said user of said computer.

43. The computer-readable media of claim 42, wherein said document is one of the group consisting of a distribution list, a report, an electronic mail message, and a spread sheet.

44. The computer-readable media of claim 39, wherein the computer-readable instructions, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute the additional action of receiving an indication that said user of said computer has accepted said at least one other user to become a member of said ad hoc network.

45. The computer-readable media of claim 39, wherein the computer-readable instructions, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute the additional action of receiving information that authenticates said at least one other user.

46. The computer-readable media of claim 39, wherein the computer-readable instructions, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute the additional action of transmitting an encryption key to said at least one other user.

47. The computer-readable media of claim 39, wherein the computer-readable instructions, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute the additional action of transmitting encrypted information to said at least one other user.

48. The computer-readable media of claim 39, wherein the computer-readable instructions, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute the additional action of presenting a virtual meeting place on the display of said computer.

49. The computer-readable media of claim 48, wherein the computer-readable instructions, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute the additional action of locating said at least one other user to said virtual meeting place and transmitting an invitation to said at least one other user located in said virtual meeting place.